

My Colors Fade to Grey

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Summary: For a Greeed, the passage of time was never felt. How long had it been since he was in the company of those he once knew? Now, sitting in a renovated Cous Coussier, Ankh could only observe those around him. His Cores have never felt so cold and now the long years were beginning to press down around him.

My Colors Fade to Grey

I apologize, I had meant to get this out on New Year's believe it or not! I hope there are no errors in this; I presented this to many people but never got responses for beta'ing, so I apologize again! Luckily chapter two is always completely done and I wrote a bit of chapter three, the final one, as well! So I guess my new rule is I should have one chapter written before I post the previous one haha. At least that way I won't be as lazy as I am now. Enjoy a tiny bit of foreshadowing and symbolism near the end!_>

* * *

><p>His Core Medals have never felt cold in the entirety of his existence, even when sealed away. A bird was always warm, and his heat radiated like an inferno, searing hot to all those except a few select few. A certain idiot always found it comforting, leeching it away when the cold months came and passed. But that was long ago. Now his inner fire had died down to simmering coals, having grown dimmer as the years progressed alone.<p>

Color seemed to be distorted when the Greeed opened his eyes. He blinked once, twice, confusion settling over his senses before his vision was restored. This happened more often now, when his thoughts drifted away from this world. Why was it that his senses were failing when he wasn't focusing? It was as if he was reverting to before, when he hadn't been fully revived nor possessing a human.

The way his senses distorted into nothing only to snap back to normal never made sense, something the Greeed just couldn't wrap his mind around. His medals, a few of them only slightly heavier than the others, never felt as if they were in danger of cracking or disintegrating. Only then would he have felt as if he had been unraveling, so similar to when his main core had cracked. Unconsciously, Ankh's right hand lifted and pressed firmly against his chest, feeling the nine medals shiver inside of him. It was a reminder that he was here—he was here and all alone.

"Chiyo! We need dessert for tables three and five." A female voice broke his train of thought, jerking back against the chair he had been slumped in. Female—he tilted his head to one side, he spied a rather short girl peering into the kitchen.

"I know I know! Please tell me you didn't break the extra plates last night." The girl frowned, glancing behind her to make sure no one was listening before she leaned closer to whisper a denial. Ankh almost snorted. It was easy to eavesdrop on them when he really wanted to, although he did have better hearing than the humans around him.

"Hey, I don't have my great grandma's strength, nor my father's clumsiness. Kazou's the one who washed the dishes last night, so if anything, it's my cousin's fault." She hissed at him grumpily. Chiyo walked out to the girl and offered her a pair of plates topped with something that smelled super sweet. Ankh's nose twitched at the scent, shifting in his seat.

"Chill Ayane, I know, I love teasing you. Tell Kazou he can leave early tonight, I know he has studying to do to get into the police academy. You have tomorrow off so you can continue with your fashion stuff." Ayana rolled her eyes as she turned, only to stop when she realized that someone was staring at her. Ankh frowned when their eyes met and held their gaze. The girl smiled and tilted her head before she leaned back towards Chiyo, whispering something that Ankh couldn't hear. Making an annoyed noise deep within his throat, he slumped further into his seat.

Chiyo, Ayane, Kazou—he tilted his head. Chiyoko, Hina, Shingo—he tilted his head. It almost could be amusing how their descendants were still living near each other, never moving and were so close. The avian's feathers ruffled and his fist clenched. It was the only reason why he had come back only a few times in the past years. Ever since the death of the humans he knew, he had left, flying everywhere and anywhere in the world to satisfy the hole in his chest. Chiyoko had been the last one, able to help name her great grandson Chiyo and watch him grow until he was five before she passed.

'_Aw, he looks like a little Chiyoko himself.'_

The origin of his name was amusing and the young man kept the traditions of the restaurant alive in honor of her. The small grin that appeared on his face quickly vanished. Eiji had been the first. He had never been apart from Ankh even after all those years — other than the time when he had shoved him through that wormhole — and the sudden departure had shocked him. Hina, Chiyoko, and Shingo had all consoled him, keeping their families together and including him on everything regardless of whether he wanted to or not. It had been the only thing that had kept him going. No matter how much he

fussed over their constant get-togethers, he never could say no. Their kids he had all watched grow, the only ones who knew who he was and called him 'the bird king' when they were small.

The brats.

Again he grunted, ignoring how a couple looked his way in curiosity. Their children however barely knew him, only hearing stories about their 'bird uncle'. And now with their kidsâ€¦ Movement caught his eyes and he watched as a rather clumsy boy ran here and there, cleaning up dishes from tables and passing out menus. Kazou. Another hopeful cop in Shingo's line, how predictable. Ankh had come back a few times in their lifetime, yet during those times, he had stayed a while. Once was when they were born, again when they were young, he was there when their grandparents died, and again when they all had graduated. He may have visited perhaps close to ten times in all, and now would be the last time, yet they didn't know it.

Sometimes, he could simply lean back against the chair and attempt to trick himself into thinking that it was the idiots from all those years ago making playful banters, their voices coming back and replacing those who were speaking. A twinge of sadness stabbed his heart, his lips drawing tight across his face. It was a rare time when he could still hear their voices; many times his memory frayed and lost what they sounded like. It never failed to make him, who was once King of Birds, to panic. When those moments came, he never hesitated in reaching for the new phone that was gifted to him when the previous one fell out of style. On it was a voiceclip of Eiji, one of the only things that made the transfer from phone to phone. Something he treasured above all others. When he listened to it, then he was able to remember those times, their voices, their facesâ€¦

Ankh's eyes closed, his nose burrowing into the old scarf of Eiji's he still wore. The scent was long gone, but the familiar texture and eye-blinding color was comforting.

The bird Greeed shoved the phone into Eiji's face with a serious look. The Rider stared at the black screen before he tilted his head up, dumbfounded on what his partner was trying to do. His phone wasn't broken, at least that's what he thought.

"_Ankh?" Eiji asked, taking the phone and turning it over in his hands, as if inspecting for damage. Although the bird was quite meticulous with his few belongings, one could never be certain with him. Ankh was silent, staring down at the human. The more he did, the more he realized that time didn't stand still as it did for him. All of them were getting older, both in mind and in body. It terrified the Greeed, much more so than when he was absorbed by his other self. The fact that those around him will leave him one day, unable to be brought back by repairing medals, began to hit him hard. He turned away, leaning against his nest._

"_Leave a voice message for me." Ankh said, scoffing as if it was the most obvious thing to do. The fact that he couldn't look Eiji in the face told the other all he needed, his lips twisting into a sad smile before it brightened up. Standing up, the brown haired boy walked towards his avian partner, never giving the other time as he wrapped his arms around him. Ankh stiffened at the sudden embrace before he huffed. The way Eiji's fingers tightened on his jacket was as if he

wouldn't ever let go. It was soothing, calming, comforting, yet the apprehension still lingered in the back of his mind despite it._

"_Idiotâ€|" he muttered, eyes flickering away once more._

"_I'm your idiot~" Eiji teased, pecking the bird's lips before he went to sit back down on his bed. With a big smile, he hit the button and began to talk, proudly noticing how Ankh's eyes softened ever so slightly._

Something was set down before him and his eyes immediately snapped open, going to glare at who dared approach him only to findâ€| Chiyo smiled down at him, nodding down to the food. He glanced down at it, finding the lack of poultry satisfying, yet was about to knock the plate away; he never was one to really eat food like humans, not since long ago. However, something made him freeze, arm half-raised to follow through on the action. Near the sliced beef and various food from this week's theme was something that brought him back. Two fried buns lay side by side.

"Iâ€| I thought you would have liked those. Even though they don't match the theme this week. I know my great-grandma said you liked eating them with someone and ... well you looked sad." Chiyo looked like he was torn between wanting to comfort him or take away the plate and disappear. It was still difficult to deal with Ankh, due to not knowing how he would react, but he was determined to try. That and the last time he mentioned the man 'Eiji', Ankh had reacted quite poorly and had left them for quite a few years. He fell silent as the Greeed reached out and picked one up.

Chiyo stood as still as possible, eyes darting back and forth between the bun and Ankh, as if by moving even slightly would cause the other to throw the food on the ground and leave. It had happened before, twice including mentioning Eiji. The other time he had left for maybe a few hours. Breath rushed out of him all at once in a sigh of relief as the Greeed bit into it, witnessing how his shoulders sagged and eyes drifted downwards to the rest of the food. The boy's lips curled into a smile, considering it a small victory before he went back to the kitchen.

'_Stupid boyâ€|'_ Ankh mentally grumbled to himself, hating how he had relented in eating the bun. He hated how the very food he was eating would bring up memories, ones that caused him pain to remember. It was when the loneliness would crash into him, reminding him once more of the man he had lost. The soft crust of the food blossomed within his mouth, briefly pausing to savor it before he quickly swallowed and dropped the rest of it onto the plate. His nose wrinkled, overpowered by the food around him.

Once upon a time he would have desired to eat everything, overwhelmed by the different tastes and textures upon his new tastebuds, nose overpowered by succulent scents. Now it was just a reminder of what he had lost. He pushed the plate away with one finger, his arm shifting from human to Greeed before it returned to normal. An itch formed beneath his skin, one he couldn't possibly get rid of. Slowly it began to travel up his arm and then down his spine.

He was getting restless and irritable the more time dragged on.

Abruptly, Ankh stood up, pushing his chair behind him as he stalked towards the door, abandoning the table and the food. Food couldn't interest him. A flash of color, faces he once knew, was all that mattered, set on the small bookshelf that resided next to the door. As his feet drew him closer, he ignored everything around him. Eiji, Hina, Shingo, Chiyoko. The four stared back at him, warm eyes and smiling faces. Nostalgia washed over him, threatening to break down the walls of reality and drag him back into memories that were hazy.

The sound of the front door being thrown open instantly set him into motion.

Jerking back to avoid a collision, he gazed down upon the dark-haired idiot who had a surprised look on his face. Ankh was about to snap at him when he noticed— Eiji's face was staring back at him. His heart clenched, only for the boy to blink. The illusion was ruined and a boy, younger than Eiji when they first met, stared back at him with surprisingly deep forest green eyes.

"Oh, sorry! I didn't realize someone was just inside the door!" It wasn't him, but for a split second, it could have. It could have been that clumsy, stupid, irritating but always useful fool. His fool, his human, his Eiji.

But it never was, god it never was him.

With a glare and a downwards twist of his lips, Ankh turned back to the picture, efficiently ending any continuation of the one-sided conversation. Lucky for him, this idiot seemed to be too confused at such a swift dismissal to even attempt to talk to him again. Floundering for a while gawking at the strangely dressed man — seriously, what was up with the black jacket that had one red sleeve, crimson pants, and that strange hairstyle? — the boy ended up finally moving past him.

Those emerald eyes lit up when they spotted Chiyo heading out from the kitchen with a receipt.

"Hey, Chiyo, who —"

"Oh my god, Taru! When did you get back? You should have told me you were landed back here." Chiyo would have tackled the other boy if the restaurant had been closed. Nearly bouncing on the balls of his feet, he practically pulled the other, backpack and all, into a huge hug. The loud clamor drew Kanzou and Ayane over, who immediately joined the embrace, laughing and each trying to talk over the other. Ankh twitched slightly where he stood, refusing to let his eyes wander over to them. The laughter, the smiles that no doubt shone on their faces, it was too familiar— too painful.

He should have just left.

The world suddenly turned on its side, everything began to blur around him as voices distorted and colors faded away. On the photograph before him, their faces began to disappear as the entirety of its surface became fuzzy black and white. Ankh's breath hitched and he twitched backwards, eyes blinking rapidly to bring himself back to the present. The sudden ringing in his ears herald the return

of the sound, so disorienting from the sudden silence that had settled around him. It had lasted for what seemed like minutes, but judging from the conversation the four were having, it couldn't have been more than twenty seconds.

Pain spread through his palms, nails having pressed crescent moon-shaped marks in the skin due to the sudden yet brief loss of his senses. For a moment he couldn't breathe, for a moment he felt as if he was floating in the sky, weightless, until everything crashed down again. The pain managed to ground him again, rooting him into the here and now.

Without a word, he ripped his eyes away from the picture and walked past the four young adults, bypassing them to enter the kitchen. Taru sputtered, mumbling to Chiyo why he allowed a stranger into the kitchen and again questioning the identity of the strange man. Ankh's lips twisted upwards, almost wanting to make a snarky remark before he bit his own tongue. Inside the freezer lay frozen meals and other such necessities, but what he sought was in the far back, nearly hidden from view.

Nearly hidden, but easily spotted with hawk vision. Ankh's hand darted in and snatched a plastic-wrapped ice candy, blue in color, and shut the door. Without even a glance at the four as they continued to watch him, he ripped the plastic off with ease and popped it in his mouth, the sweet and savory flavor calming him as memories resurfaced. These memories never hurt; the ice candy was a source of comfort these days than a treat, a buffer that allowed him to relax. It was probably why Chiyoko's family always kept a box of them around.

"Ankh?" The said bird's eyes darted over slightly, peering through several strands of loose fringe that had fallen into his line of vision. The question hadn't been directed towards him. The newcomer â€" what was his name, Taru? â€" nodded. A soft melancholic look appeared on Chiyo's face.

"He's a long-time family friend. He arrived a month ago actually. We all haven't seen him in a few years. I think the most he's stayed with us was when we were children. All the times he visited, you were never around. Ankh'sâ€|. not that good with strangers to be honest." Taru's eyes scrunched up, scrutinizing Ankh, whose eyes settled into an annoyed glare at the look. The bird bristled at what Chiyo said and sent him a glare as well, lips curling into a snarl after he bit into the ice candy.

Strangers? Hahâ€| He barely liked anyone even if they weren't strangersâ€| Sure there were a few exceptions, but he wasn't about to say that out loud.

"Were you childhood friends? I don't believe I ever recall seeing him." Ayane chuckled at Taru's response, shaking her head as her hands clasped together.

"He left long before you met us, Taru. He used to be close to our great-grandparents." Ayana's eyes widened and she slapped a hand over her mouth in shock. She had let loose a secret they had been keeping for a long time. She shrank down a few inches, eyes meeting the suddenly cool and eerily calm gaze of the Greeed. Kazou and Chiyo both nearly snapped their necks as they turned to stare at the girl.

To say that out loud, that Ankh knew people around 100 years ago when he looked around their age would raise red flags.

It wasn't as if they didn't trust Taru, but they knew from Chiyo's great grandmother and their own grandparents that not everyone would be so understanding. After all, how would a normal human react to the fact that a Greeed, a monster made from desire and medals, still roamed the world after other Greeeds tried to destroy the world? That Ankh was older, much older than any of them. Taru's mouth opened and closed like a fish's, unable to comprehend what his friend had just spoken.

"W-wait? He knew Nana Chiyoko?" Ankh's eyebrows raised. Nana? He knew the other was motherly, but that strange nickname was just crossing the line. Before the disgust could crawl onto his features, he quickly bit down on the ice as the other continue.

"That can't be right. Okay, he could have met Nana, but Ayane, your and Kazou's great grandparents already passed away before you were born. Are you sure it wouldn't have been his parents or something? Heck, he resembles Kazou and Ayane's great-grandfather, so maybe he's on his side of the family?" The three looked at each other at a loss on what to say, they couldn't tell the truth since they had promised both Ankh and their families that yetâ€| Sure the Greeed did look too similar to Shingo, but after hearing the stories, they understood why. It was one reason why they didn't put a certain picture that had Ankh in it near the door. The famous detective never had a twin brother.

Ankh had to hide a snort at the other's incredulously confused look. Parents? He never had parents, and honestly he wouldn't consider those arrogant mages who created them parents, ever. Even as Ankh had observed the familial roles in a household, he never felt a longing to have these 'parents' of his own. Upon viewing how incredibly confused this youngster looked, he could feel something welling up within him. For the first time in years, he felt like a hawk again, having locked his eyes on a rabbit that didn't know that there was a predator overhead ready to strike. Oh, he could have fun with this.

"How old are you?" Ankh sauntered closer, the ice candy half-eaten in his hands. He paused to lick a bead of the sweet melting ice before it could drip onto his hands â€" he hated having sticky skin after having one â€" and smirked. The classic how old are you question? With a predatory look in his eyes, Ankh leaned closer, almost yearning for the other to run away like a terrified little rabbit. Screw being secretive, he wanted to know how this boy would react.

It wasn't often when he felt like the old Ankh, the one whose tongue was sharp and didn't care if he caused trouble.

"I'm over 900 years old. Would you believe me if I said I was no human but a Greeed, a monster born out of desire and medals, one who was once ruled over the lands as the King of Birds? If I wanted to in this state, I could devour the entire world and you with it. If I so _desired_, " Ankh nearly laughed as the word rolled off his tongue oh so pleasantly. Desire was something he could never get tired of, at least back when Eiji had been alive. There, desire had reigned supreme, warming him until he was as hot as the sun, "I could burn

you to a crisp and I could also make a Yummy out of your one desire." Here Ankh trailed off, eyebrows furrowing suddenly. His desireâ€¦ It was of the worldâ€¦ Of traveling, of beingâ€¦ of being free. Abruptly he pulled back. A desire like that, it was like Eiji's desire to help the world and reach his hand out to everyone he came across. No Yummy would benefit cell medals from that.

The worried looks coming from the three went unnoticed by him, having noted the sudden hardening of his eyes and stiffness that collapsed the grace of his movements.

But the desire of being free was something he knew too well. Even though he was free to soar, he never could truly be free, not untilâ€¦ Something burned in his pocket and his free hand trailed down to stroke it through the fabric. The calling only heightened and he could feel himself losing to it. The wind whispered his name and it was like he was floating in the air, soaring, diving, flying. Eyes that had fallen shut quickly snapped open before he could succumb to the red energy that threatened to consume him and lift him towards the kingdom he once. The tenth medal longed to be absorbed, powerful energy that was his and his alone swirling underneath the red and gold surface.

No, not yet.

The medal answered with another burst of energy that was invisible to all others except his own eyes. It burned his hands, scorched his senses with the scent of fire, ash, andâ€¦ rain, the smell of rain that hung in the clouds above, the coolness of the air high up in the sky. Ankh's breath caught in his throat, almost choking at the overwhelming sensations before the energy subsided, its job done. Funny how a medal could have a mind of its own, the mind of the Bird King who wanted to return to his rightful place. He knew it wouldn't be too much longer until he succumbed.

"W-what?" It was almost embarrassing how high-pitched Taru's voice had come out, two octaves higher than normal. The hawk's eyes shifted from him to the other three humans, observing how wide eyed they were at him revealing his secretly so casually. Tch. It wasn't as if anyone would believe such a story, even one that was true. Humans were still so closed-minded even 100 years later. Pitiful. As far as their evolution went, their technology, it seemed they no longer believed strange things could happen.

A feeling of restless grew within him and he pushed past the four, only to stop once exiting the kitchen. He twirled the ice candy in his hands before he devoured the rest of it, tossing it into a trash can nearby. Fingers ached to hold onto something, yet even as they drifted towards the medal, he instead clenched them into fists.

"Youâ€¦ I want that picture." The way his voice sounded, the slight waver, Chiyo's brows furrowed. That picture? What pic- The boy's eyes widened with realization. That picture! A quick glance to the shelf that held the one Ankh had previously been staring at for the past few minutes gave the boy understanding to why it was requested. There had been a reason why the original picture of the five originals was never shown anymore. Heck, he remembered seeing it until Nana died when he turned five. That was when his grandmother took the photo down and replaced it of the four without Ankh.

Only later did he understand why. Without those who had been with him back then, there would be questions on why the bird was still around. Chiyo's eyes saddened and he nodded, heading up to go and take the pictures. Ankh stared after him, longing to return to where his nest had remade a month ago. Yet even as the room remained the same, his nest would no longer be there. The red cloth was gone, a hint to all what he was planning to do if they bothered to notice. The little mementoes of those four idiots still lay scattered messily in the room, yet he was quite certain they would never be thrown away.

The three humans had too much respect for him and those who passed away to do such a thing. Funny, he was not used to others respecting him like that.

Taru was staring incredulously at him, quite annoying actually. He mumbled questions at the two cousins about Ankh, yet they skirted details, something Ankh was grateful for. He wasn't too keen on filling the boy " who he didn't even know or even _care_ to know " about his life story. No doubt the three would eventually let him in on a few things, but Ankh would be long gone by then" Long gone.

A creak in the stairs above heralded the return of Chiyo, who clutched two pictures in his hand, one framed while the other was not. Without saying a word, he slipped by the others, and Ankh himself, to rummage around in the freezer, pulling out something from a tiny black box in the freezer, something Ankh was surprised to have overlooked. Pushing away from the wall he had been leaning on, he took a step closer to Chiyo as he approached.

"I found this a few years ago up in the room and kept it in mine for a while. Apparently Nana placed the copy in a frame and preserved the original in an album to keep it safe." Chiyo handed the original to him, clutching the framed one to his chest. He knew that the picture belonged out here, next to the one that excluded Ankh. Regardless of the confusion and questions it would bring, Chiyo would be ready to risk it. After all, their families had considered him a part of the family, albeit estranged since his parents didn't really know him that well.

Ankh's eyes softened ever so slightly as his fingers curled delicately over the photo, as if he was afraid he would bend or damage it. It was carefully preserved, the color still bright and no blemishes or scratches could be seen. It was easy now to remember this moment, the memory flowing back to him easily and allowed the warmth to pool in his chest. He had been annoyed that day, hating to have to be dragged into 'human activities'. It never was like he didn't _secretly_ enjoy them at times " depending on what they were of course. He was never one to sit down for pictures, obvious by how Eiji and Hina had their arms around his shoulders while they were crouching near the restaurant's sign. Shingo and Chiyoko were next to them, a regular customer having taken the picture for them. He had only been grateful they hadn't been 'dressed up' that day. Something about Chiyoko saying it would be nice to have a normal picture that could last a lifetime.

The Greeed nearly snorted. A lifetime" Still, his eyes never lost their softness. This was a treasure he could never let go, just like Eiji's scarf. As he kept his eyes lowered to prevent them from seeing

the longing in his eyes, Ankh slipped the picture into his jacket pocket. Before they could question him, or rather Taru ask who the heck he really was, the bird exited the door. The four would follow, he had no doubt about that. Three of them knew that when he walked out the door like that without saying anything, that he could possibly end up leavingâ€|

"Ankhâ€| Youâ€| you're not coming back, are you?" While Chiyo fought hard to let his voice waver, Ayane protested loudly, having to be quieted by her cousin. Only Taru remained silent, not understanding what was going on.

"Tch, what gave you that idea?" Chiyo's face fell at the response, eyes dropping to the ground. But why? Was it because of them? Or was it becauseâ€| He closed his eyes, biting his lip. It was, wasn't it? Ankh's eyes were burning as the boy finally met his gaze, crimson bleeding into Ankh's dark irises. A smile lit Chiyo's lips and he nodded, surprising Ankh at his understanding.

"We'll miss you." The soft tone rooted Ankh to the spot, clenching his teeth together to prevent himself from speaking out. How many times had the aged trio spoken that when he left to roam the world after Eiji's death? The same sad and bittersweet choice of words. Swallowing the lump that had lodged in his throat, Ankh glanced to the side. Fingers tightened on the plastic-wrapped ice that had been obviously been hand-made by Chiyo. Even now, he could smell the cherry flavor, sweet and delicious, wafting up to him.

He hated goodbyes, he hated greetings. He hated leaving. A hawk never liked to move from territory to territory, they claimed what was there and fought to protect it. Yet it had been too long, too long of being alone with this hole in his chest. Making it to a millennia would not be possible. He knew where to go, what to do. There was just one more thing left to do before he gave into the calling of becoming who he once had been.

The King of Birds.

A small chattering noise jolted him out of his musings, startling the kids behind him, who pointed to the blue bird that had landed on the stone fence surrounding Cous Coussier. It was a blue jay, one that seemed too far from home on another continent. Ankh's eyes narrowed at the strange appearance, yet he thought nothing of it as it chattered some more and then flew off. Flew offâ€|

A flurry of curled red feathers filled the air, falling to the ground as a dazzling array of colors filled the air. Large wings flexed to their full length, reds, blues, greens, yellows, so many colors radiated from them. The gasps behind him caused him to pause, eyes darting to the source. Sure the three had known about his origins, yet he had forgotten they had only seen his wings once before. A smirk began to form on his lips, his eyes glowing red. But his Greeed formâ€|. They've only seen his right arm.

Medals rippled across his form, his human guise falling away to reveal what he properly looked like. Fire filled his heart, having not taken this form in so long. It was like coming home. The gasps returned, and this time he turned to view them, wings fluttering besides him. Taru had fallen over, pointing at him with wide eyes. Ankh barked out a laugh that was wild and free, wings curving to show

off their brilliant display of colors. The surprise and marvel on the other three's faces was almost comforting, only fueling the inferno that had begun to build within him, rekindling the coals that he once thought to have crumbled into ash.

"Ankh?" Kazou's voice was low and hesitant, yet the way he stepped forward with a smileâ€¦The tension drained away from Ankh's body. He should never have doubted how he would have reacted, especially if they knew about him from their grandparents and Chiyoko. The avian Greeed looked down upon them before his gaze returned to the sky which called out to him.

He really hated goodbyes.

With one mighty stroke of his wings, Ankh leaped into the sky, the sun brightening the colors of his wings as he soared higher and higher until he vanished from the humans' view. He felt free, felt as if the burden that had weighed him down over the years was starting to lift and disappear as the wind joined his ascent.

Chiyo stood there for a few minutes, eyes straining to find the Greeed in the sky, to catch sight of those rainbowed wings. It was for naught; Ankh was gone. Movement to his side caught his eyes instead as Kazou bent down to pluck one of the feathers off the ground before the wind could carry it away. Ayane helped Taru up, the boy unable to properly process what had happened and what he had seen.

"We'll explain everything later Taru, it's a long story." She promised as they re-entered the restaurant. The girl quietly disappeared upstairs as Chiyo paused next to the bookshelf, a frown etched upon his lips. He was goneâ€¦ Even though he should have been used to the feeling of the avian leaving every now and then, he had thoughtâ€¦ he had thought Ankh could have stayed longer yetâ€¦

It was selfish, he knew. Ayane knew, Kazou knew. Yet the arrogant and difficult Ankh still had a special place in their heart. Despite his nature, they knew he cared. Chiyo was pretty sure he knew that they cared for him too, considered him family no matter how he would argue against it. The man named Eiji stared back at him, from the picture in his hands and from the one on the shelf. Chiyo couldn't imagine having lost someone he truly lovedâ€¦

Heart and mind made up, the boy moved the picture over and set the original one where the previous had been. Ayane reappeared behind Chiyo, smiling as she held a silver-framed picture in her hands. Silently, she gave it to the boy, whose face broke out in a happy grin. There would be a lot of questions of why he was in two different pictures in two different eras butâ€¦

Chiyo situated the third frame next to the original. The three young adults' faces stared back at them with laughing smiles on their lips. Ankh was in the middle of them, sitting on a bench while a passerby had taken the picture of them. The bird looked annoyed, one hand draped across his knee that had been pulled up to his chest and was scowling, yet there was some spark in those eyes that Chiyo always thought was happiness. The three had crowded around them and held up peace signs.

It had only been two weeks since that picture.

Smiling, Kazou placed one of the red feathers next to the picture.

"Goodbye Ankhâ€| "

End
file.